

Message Text

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SUBJECT: OUTDOOR UNOFFICIAL ART EXHIBIT SMASHING SUCCESS

USIA FIR IBS, IEE (USIA OPERATIONS CENTER PLEASE PASS IBS ON RECEIPT)

1. LARGE NUMBERS OF MUSCOVITES THROGGED TO OPEN FIELD IN IZMAILOVSKY PARK SEPT 29 TO VIEW PICTURES OF SOME SIXTY, MOSTLY UNOFFICIAL, SOVIET ARTISTS. CROWD ESTIMATED BY EMBOFFS PRESENT TO BE 2,000 TO 3,000 AT ANY ONE TIME, WITH PERHAPS 8,000 TO 10,000 IN ATTENDANCE DURING FOUR-HOUR SHOW. MANY FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND DIPLOMATS ALSO ATTENDED.

2. EMBOFFS WITNESSED NO INCIDENTS DURING EXHIBIT AND DESPITE THE CRUSH, BOTH ARTISTS AND CROWD WERE ORDERLY THROUGHOUT. ALTHOUGH UNIFORMED MILITIA SHOWED UP IN FORCE, THEY STAYED MAINLY OUTSIDE EXHIBIT AREA AT ENTRANCES TO PARK AND IN WOODS. SEVERAL ARTISTS CLAIMED HAVING SEEN MANY KGB PERSONNEL IN PLAIN CLOTHES IN CROWD, BUT IF SO, THEY DID NOT TRY TO START TROUBLE. CROWD WAS CLEARLY CURIOUS AND INTERESTED IN PICTURES, WHICH RANGED FROM REALISTIC TO EXTREMELY ABSTRACT, AND EVEN APPLAUDED SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR PICTURES. THERE WAS MUCH BANTER BETWEEN SPECTATORS AND ARTISTS, WITH MANY PRESENT WRITING

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DOWN NAMES OF ARTISTS, TAKING PICTURES AND TRYING TO

DETERMINE THE MEANING OF THESE UNUSUAL (IN SOVIET CONTEXT) PICTURES. THERE WERE SOME SNORTS OF DISAPPROVAL BUT VERY LITTLE JEERING OR MAKING FUN. ARTISTS WERE EXTREMELY PLEASED AND PROUD OF LARGE TURNOUT AND WILLINGLY DISCUSSED THEIR ART WITH THOSE INTERESTED. TENOR OF EVENT WAS THAT OF A SERIOUS SHOW OF ART AND OF A REAL HAPPENING, THE LIKES OF WHICH HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN MOSCOW IN RECENT MEMORY.

3. COMMENT: ARTISTS OWE DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR LARGE CROWD TO AUTHORITIES WHO BROKE UP FIRST EXHIBIT (ATTENDED BY ABOUT 400), THEREBY STIMULATING INTEREST IN SECOND EXHIBIT ON PART OF THOSE WHO HAD HEARD OF EVENT THROUGH FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS AND BY WORD OF MOUTH.

4. FOR IBS: SUCCESSFUL EXHIBIT, AND WHAT SEEMS SO FAR TO HAVE BEEN ENLIGHTENED HANDLING BY GOVERNMENT AND SECURITY FORCES, GIVES VOA RUSSIAN SERVICE GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE IN NEWS COVERAGE OF THE EVENT. FOREIGN RADIO, AND PARTICULARLY VOA, WERE ACKNOWLEDGED ON THE EXHIBIT FIELD AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF NEWS ABOUT THE EVENT. BOTH ARTISTS AND GOVERNMENT ARE AWARE OF THIS, OF COURSE. EMBASSY COMMENDS VOA FOR GENERALLY EXCELLENT COVERAGE WE HAVE BEEN HEARING.
DUBS

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